

**Why don't countries check stolen passports against Interpol data, asks secretary-general
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Interpol secretary-general Ronald K. Noble has asked why countries are not checking stolen passports against its database. He was referring to the two passengers who boarded MH370 with stolen documents. Travellers using stolen passports can slip through layers of security as long as their documents are not checked against Interpol's database of stolen and lost travel documents.

CNN reported today that it was not uncommon for a traveller's passport to be checked more than four times at major international airports around the world.

However, passengers using stolen passports will slip through airport authorities undetected if their documents are not run through Interpol's database.

The recent disappearance of Malaysia Airlines flight MH370 has raised eyebrows after two passengers were found to have boarded the flight using stolen documents.

The passports of Italian Luigi Maraldi and Austrian Christian Kozel were reported stolen in Thailand several years ago.

Hence, it was a shock when their names appeared on the passenger manifest list of flight MH370.

When both discovered their names were on the manifest, they contacted their families to inform them that they were alive and well.

Malaysian authorities have been scrutinising closed-circuit television video footage taken from KLIA to ascertain the identities of the two passengers.

Immigration procedures at KLIA have also come under the spotlight as questions are asked how two passengers with stolen passports slip past authorities.

MH370 dropped off the radar at 1.20am on Saturday, carrying 12 crew members and 227 passengers.

CNN reported Interpol secretary-general Ronald K. Noble as asking why were only a handful of countries worldwide taking the necessary security measures.

"Interpol is asking why many countries do not take care to ensure that persons possessing stolen passports are not boarding international flights," Noble told CNN.

Prior to the disappearance of MH370, no country had checked stolen passports against Interpol's list.

However, the stolen passports were added to the lost-document database in 2012 and 2013, Noble told CNN.

"It is countries, not airlines, which have access to Interpol's data. Many governments do not usually check passports against the database," Noble added.

Interpol revealed that last year, passengers were able to board planes more than a billion times without having their travel documents checked against Interpol's database.

CNN reported that the International Air Transport Association estimated airlines worldwide carried more than 3.1 billion passengers.

Aviation security expert Richard Bloom told CNN said many people who used stolen or fake passports were not linked to terrorism activities.

"They might be trying to immigrate illegally to another country or they might be smuggling stolen goods."

Bloom, the director of terrorism, intelligence and security studies at the Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University, said these individuals might even be trying to import legal goods without paying taxes.

Although there has been no direct connection with between stolen passports and MH370, but Noble maintains that was not the point.

"The main concern is that a passenger was able to board an international flight using a stolen passport listed in Interpol's database," Noble told CNN.

"For years Interpol has been asking why should countries wait for a tragedy to occur before putting prudent security measures in place at borders and boarding gates?"

Interpol's lost document database was created in 2002 following the September 11 attacks in 2001. – March 11, 2014.

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